

# THE RE-OPENING OF THE BASIN RESERVE 29th NOVEMBER 1980









November 29, 1980 sees the opening of the R. A. Vance Stand. Over the year many plans and models were brought forward to update the Basin Reserve but without success. It was the vision of Christchurch engineer Bill Lovell-Smith that saw the need to redevelop the ground and its shape so that a new stand could be built that would comply with the needs of the City Council.

The first grandstand at the Basin Reserve was built by the Caledonian Society and sold to the City Council in 1876 for £400.

The ground to the left of the Caledonian Stand was flat and no one is clear when it was built up. The first band rotunda was on the city side of the stand.

A large open drain ran through the ground and was an excellent resort for eeling.

By 1890 the band rotunda had shifted to the southern side.









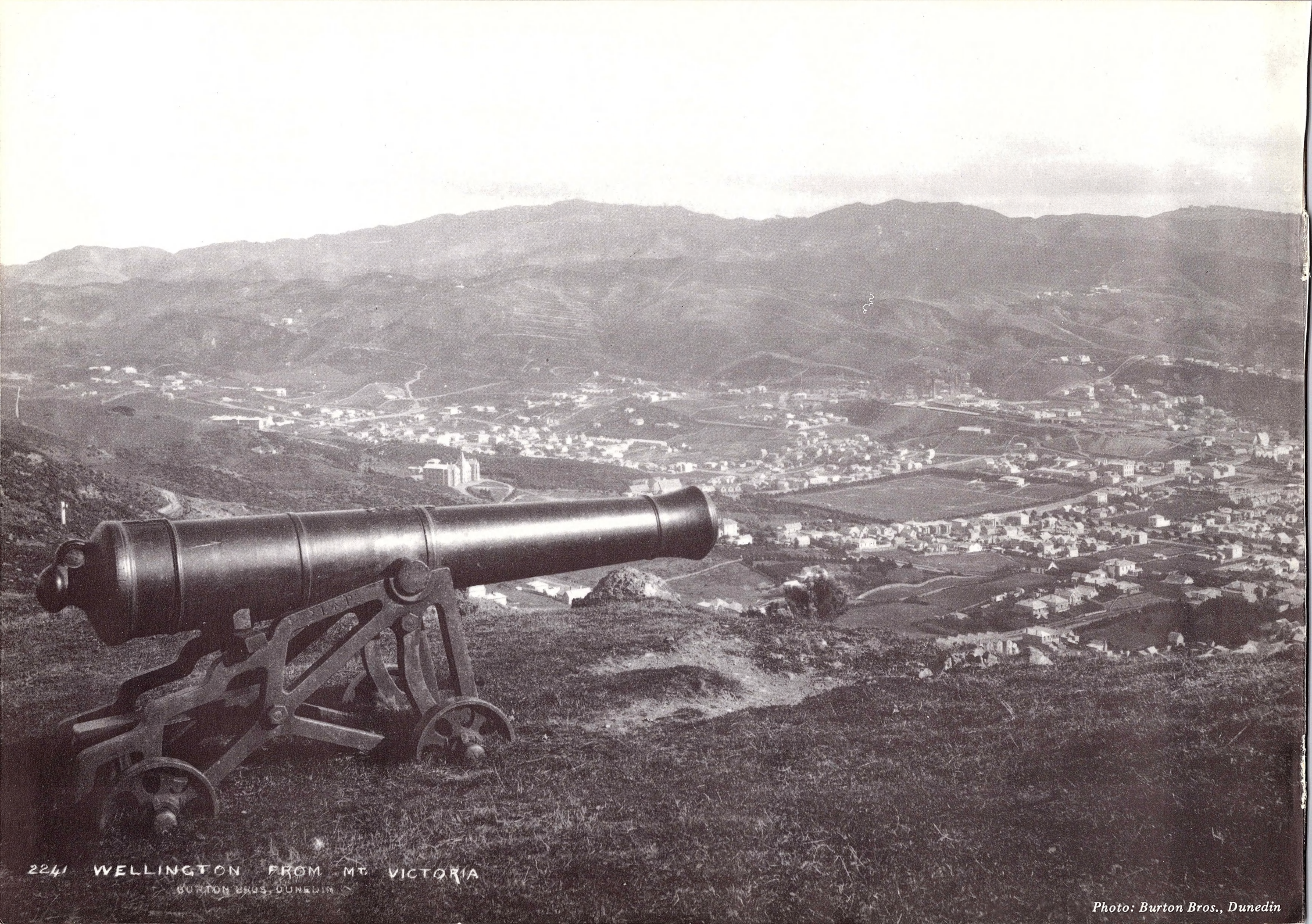
Dominating the north-west corner of the Basin Reserve for nearly all of its existence has been St. Patrick's College and the groundsman's cottage.

The difference between the two photographs taken in 1885 and 1915 is that the top level of the tower has been pulled down.



The groundsman's cottage is now at the back of the R. A. Vance stand.





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By 1969 the congestion of the city is obvious, as are the lighting towers in the four corners of the ground to enable sports to take place at night. Early in 1980 the new circular shape of the Basin Reserve became apparent.



The panoramic view of the Western Hills taken from the top of Mt. Victoria in 1890 shows the rectangular shape of the Basin Reserve.



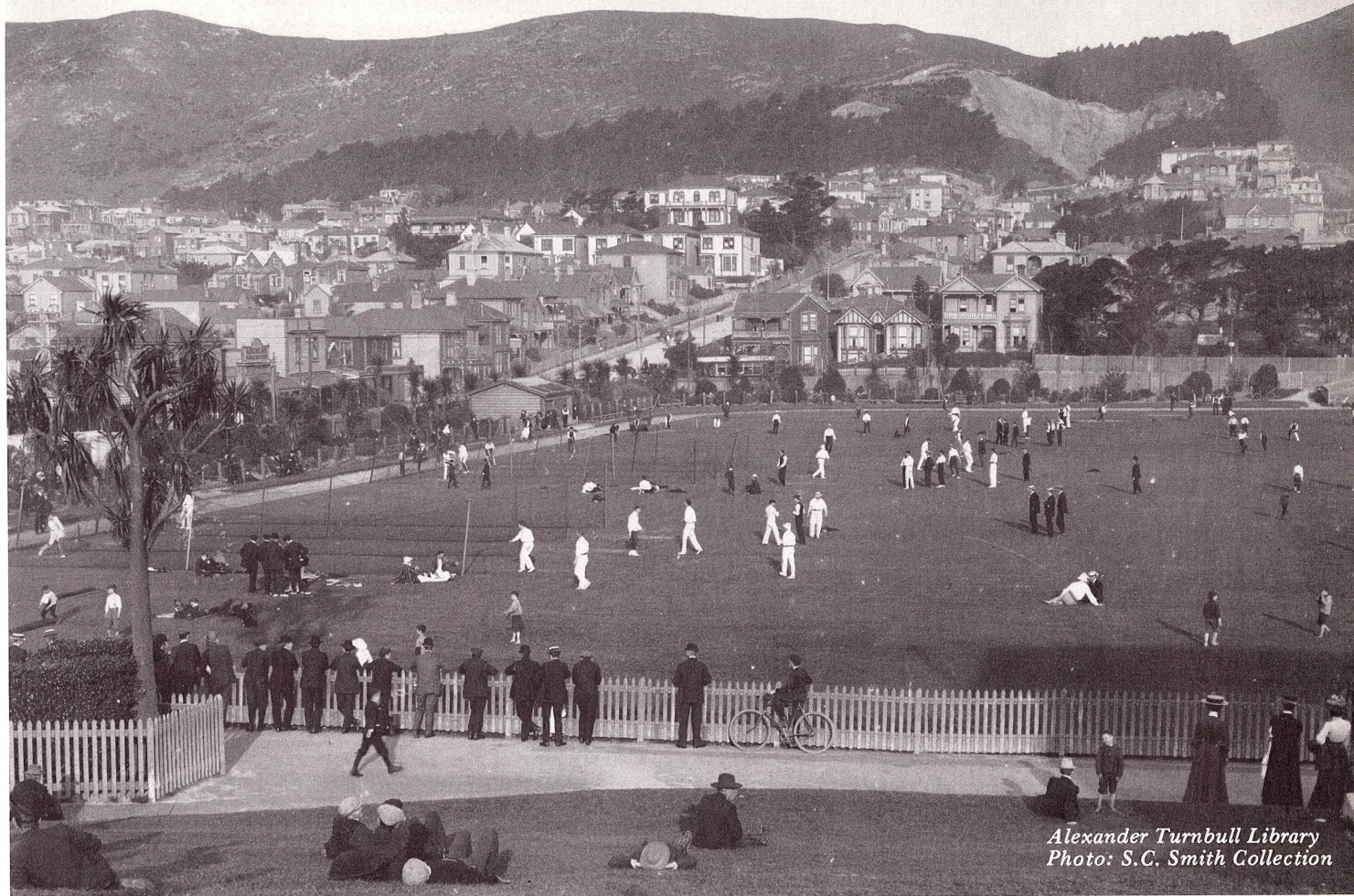




Photo: Alexander Turnbull Library



In 1925 a new grandstand was opened. The carillon, is conspicuous by its absence and this is one of the best photographs taken that show the Mt. Cook Barracks on the site now occupied by the National Museum. Note the trees growing outside the ground.



*Alexander Turnbull Library  
Photo: S.C. Smith Collection*



*Photo: D.O. Neely*

Clubs have always practiced at the Basin Reserve. In 1908 practices appear to have been well attended. It is interesting to note that there are trees growing inside the fence and that the top

deck of a double-decker tram had a grandstand view as it made its way around the ground.

Contrary to popular belief, not every player at practice in 1929 changed into his whites.





*Photo: D.O. Neely*

The photograph showing Dempster and Mills both being not out 100 was taken during their record first-wicket stand against England in January 1930 in the first official test ever played at the Basin.



*Photo: D.O. Neely*

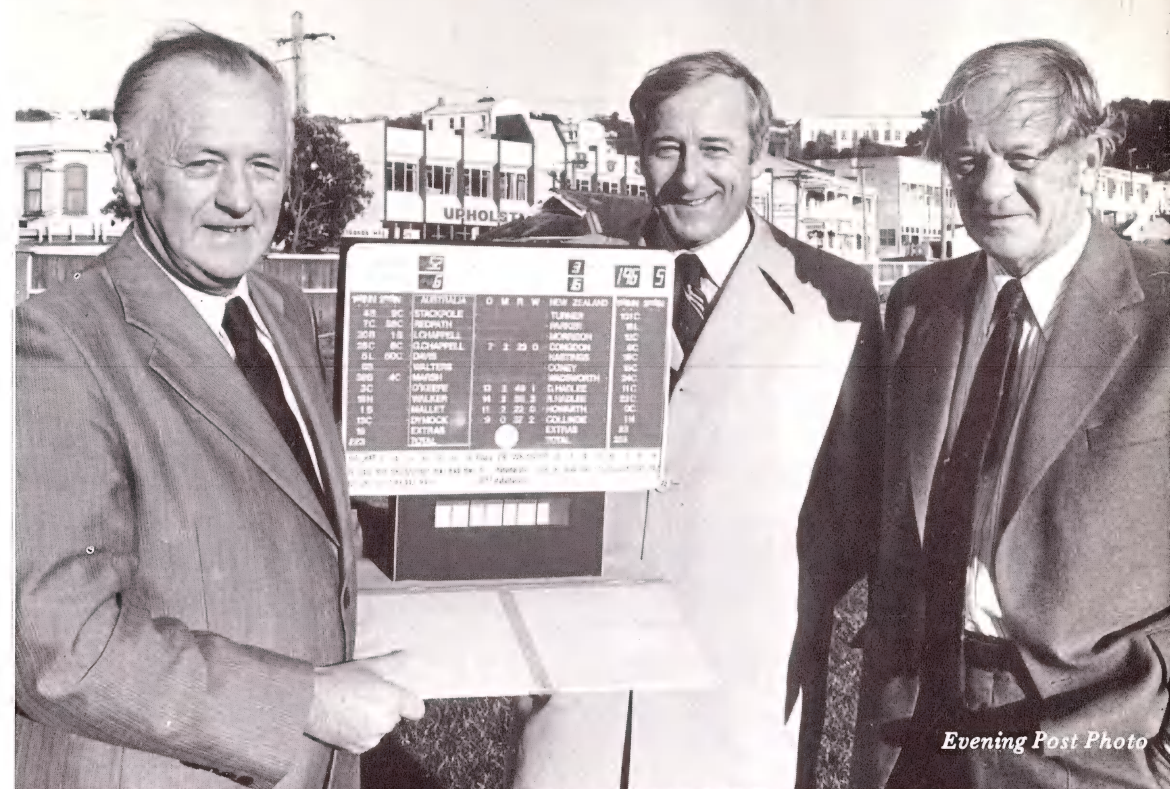
In 1923 the scoreboard was situated alongside the city end of the ground. In 1927 Mr. Eric Riddiford donated £250 to build a new scoreboard on the eastern side of the ground.



For 1980 a most comprehensive scoreboard has been donated by Cable Price Downer. The use of electronic figures and magnetic letters on a steel face will enable a great variety of scoring systems, programmes, notices, etc., to be displayed.

The Chairman and Chief Executive of Cable Price Downer, Mr. R. W. Steele, shows a model to His Worship the Mayor of Wellington, Mr. M. Fowler, and the Chairman of the New Zealand Cricket Council, Mr. R. A. Vance.

The aerial shot taken in March 1980 shows the new site of the scoreboard and the grassy slopes on the eastern side of the ground.



Evening Post Photo



Photo: Evening Post





*Photo: Anon*

In 1893 six games of cricket took place on the ground at the same time.

The most common view for members watching from the R. A. Vance Stand will be across the pitch into the St. Mark's corner.

In 1876 no one objected to a horse grazing on the field. Wellington College and Oliver's Caledonian Hotel are prominent landmarks.



*Alexander Turnbull Library  
Photo: T.N. Taylor Collection*





Photo: M. Lehaney

St. Mark's dominates the match between Wellington and Auckland in 1921.





The different acceptance of dress is clearly shown between the photo taken in 1955, where men wore suits and felt hats, and the one taken in 1971 where sunfrocks, bare backs and towelling hats were the norm. A new St. Mark's complex has arisen while the crane marks the start of the new wing at Wellington College.



The bank that the R. A. Vance Stand was cut out of, became a beer garden in 1969.



*Photo: Evening Post*



*Photo: Evening Post*

In 1979 construction began on the new stand. On November 29 1980 the R. A. Vance Stand was officially opened.





The refurbishing of the entire Basin Reserve has been a longstanding ambition of Wellingtonians and is now realised.

This historic and unique ground in the centre of the City is now blessed with a sense of enclosure, not only with the new stand but with the grass mounding to the east and south.

The design concept originated with the late Bill Lovell-Smith and his colleagues and has been furthered by the undoubted contribution of our Parks & Recreation Department. The realignment of the ground has brought the field much closer to the old stand which, for so many years, was remotely distanced from the scene of action, and the realignment of the wicket on a northwest, southeast axis greatly advantages both cricketers and spectators.

The Council has spared no effort to create of the Basin Reserve a venue which is unsurpassed in Australasia for cricket, soccer and other open air occasions and the new stand is the focal point of this enterprise. This boldly shaped and excellently sited facility, containing cricket practice wickets, splendid amenity rooms and 2000 covered seats is the envy of many cities and is a symbol of the Council's belief in the future of organised sport and the Basin Reserve.

We had little hesitation in proposing that the pavilion be known as the R.A. Vance Stand because Rob Vance has been not only a great cricketer and cricket administrator but also consistently behind the development and upgrading of this facility and is a most respected Wellingtonian.

30/9/80

*Michael J. C. M. C.*  
MAYOR

